538 the novel Pirmieji metai (The First Year). In his novel in two volumes Ieškau gyvenimo draugo (I Seek a Companion through Life) Liudas Dovydėnas introduces us to the life of elementary school teachers. Another of his works from peasant life, Broliai Domeikos (The Brothers Domeika) earned for him the state prize in 1936. (13) Along with

[658]

13. The Lithuanian state, since 1935, has regularly given a prize of money for the most valuable literary work of the year: the importance of this practice should not be underestimated, since in a small nation, even under the most favorable circumstances, literary works have editions of only a few thousand copies.

those already mentioned, Inčiūra and Zobarskas are making a name for themselves among the writers of novels. A tender and subtle love story, Valentina, was published by Vaičiulaitis.

536 In comparison to the abundance of prose publications, especially of the last decades, dramatic writing has been secondary, although its traditions, too, reach back as far as the period of the prohibition on printing. Along with Fromas Gužutis (1822-1900), whose drama in five acts Ponai ir Mužikai (Lords and Peasants) is based on the relations between the nobility and the people, Petliukas and Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, with his drama Blinda, became known after 1900. The greatest success was achieved by Keturakis (pseudonym for J. Vilkutaitis) with his peasant comedy, published in 1895, Amerika Pirtyje (America in the Pirtis), which at that time went across all the amateur stages of Lithuania and has still proved to be a drawing card even today. In addition, Šiaulėniškis may be named; his drama Sparnai (Wings) is under the influence of modern symbolism.

/279/ The development of Lithuanian dramatic

536 writing could become stronger only after the repeal of the prohibition on printing. The dramatic works of Maironis and Vydūnas have already been mentioned in another place. In this context belongs also the dramatic work of Sofija Čiurlionienė-Kymantaitė. Her drama Aušros sūnus (Son of Aušra) was produced with success, and her fairy play, published in 1932, of the twelve brothers who were transformed into crows, and in which various Lithuanian fairy tale motifs are interwoven, found great approval. Finally, from an earlier period stems a number of smaller comedies which appeared in 1920 under the title Komedijos (Comedies). Čiurlionienė also made a name for herself as a prose writer. Written with refined sentiment is her novel Šventmarė, published in 1937, which presents before our eyes in plastic images the conditions in a Catholic rectory toward the end of the century. In the center of the plot stands the clergyman himself, the "Šventmarė," the "holy" bigoted Marie, and above all the girl Barbutė as typical of the young female generation of the period; she is especially well characterized, with her ardent wish to learn and educate herself.

Among the most successful dramatists of the present belongs Petras Vaičiūnas, born in 1890, whose dramas have been produced by the Kaunas state theater with great popular success. Tuščios pastangos (Vain Exertions), 1926, for example is based on the problem of the educated Lithuanian who comes from the country and who is inclined in the city to forget rapidly everything that connects him with the village. In Patriotai the author exposes the false patriotism which becomes a pretence for impure purposes. In the same way Nuodemingas angelas (The Sinful Angel), Sulaužyta priesaika (The Broken Oath), and other dramas of the same author were performed with great acclaim. It may be added that 538 Vaičiūnas also possesses a reputation as a lyricist and has become very popular through several of his poems.

poems.

/280/ A great artistic success has been achieved in the last years by Balys Sruoga, who has already been discussed as a lyricist, with his verse dramas Milžino paunksnej (In the Shadow of the Giant) and Baisioji naktis (The Terrible Night). The first is built around the person of the "giant," Grand Duke Vytautas, who does not make an appearance himself but determines the course of the plot through his personality; (14) the second deals with

[113]

14. The first act is printed in Horst Engert, Aus litauischer Dichtung(Kaunas, 1935), pp. 77-104 (Deutsche Nachdichtungen).

the revolution of 1905, in which it is not the revolution but the lack of understanding in wide circles of its deeper meaning and the absence of a high goal which seems terrible to the author--the night which still enveloped the people at that time. Among the dramas of the last years, the historico-biographical portrait Vincas Kudirka by Inčiura should be named. J. Petrulis achieved the greatest success with his often produced drama Prieš srovę (Against the Stream), in which the period of serfdom comes alive. Finally, the great poems of Krėvė, Šarūnas, Skirgaila, and Likimo keliais (On the Paths of Fate), which will be discussed in the next section, also have dramatic form. Enough of names! In the present context we can only give a brief survey of the Lithuanian literature of the present. Thus in conclusion only two more writers will be mentioned, who seem mature and finished enough in their art to permit a judgment, and who on the other hand can be considered as typical representatives of the Lithuanian art of the present both in their subject matter and also in their treatment of the material--Mykolaitis-Putinas and Krėvė-Mickevičius--the former born in 1894, the latter twelve years

† [see pp. 302 - 303, cat. 116 -- Analyst]

538

And even now, when I quietly think of your
name,
The sun always laughs at me and the blos-
soms are fragrant.

I do not know if you were with me long:
Between two dawns the night did not get
dark.
And even now, with the glow of these dawns
The sky shines here in the evening, my
being is enkindled.

I do not know if you will return someday,
Nor how far a first joy sends forth its
light;--
But the smiling and happiness of the spring
sun entreats you
To hide from me, that you cannot do.

/283/ Wherever I go, light and blossoms are
round about,
All my thoughts are again brought into
confusion,
As once, when you joyfully flew to my
breast,--
Even if today I have only night, only
night.

536 From the lyrics of his youth Putinas went on to drama and prose. In the mystery play Nuvainikuotoji vaidilutė (The Sinful Priestess) he seeks to grasp the calling and destiny of his people; in his Valdovas he gives a drama of the warlike early history: by murdering the legitimate ruler, Krūšna, an ambitious, cruel despot, has come into power. He has the son of the murdered man educated together with his own son, Gytis. But political enemies kidnap the children, who grow up far from him and finally rise up against the despot. They are taken prisoners, and at the

1 [1894 -- Analyst]

536 meeting with Krūšna Gytis provokes him so greatly that the ruler draws his sword and fatally wounds him. Only then does Gytis confess to his father who he is, and the father recognizes his son:

It is he . . .it is he . . .only now comes recognition,
Oh his eyes!--what eyes--oh!
And how he looks-- --oh--yo accursed father!
He calls his father--yes, he calls to me.

Paternal feeling gains the upper hand in Krūšna. His kingdom and his power no longer mean anything to him. All earthly values pale before the elementary experience of this hour.

538 If Putinas had already drawn to himself the attention of wide circles through his lyrics and his dramas, with his novel in three volumes Altorių šešėlyj (In the Shadow of the Altars), published in 1933, he achieved the greatest popular success that up to that time had ever been accorded a novel in Lithuania. A lively language, which, in contrast to that of most of the other authors, was not colored by dialect and was understandable to all, as well as the novelty and boldness of the theme contributed to its success.

/284/ In the center of the plot stands the young Vasaris, destined by his parents to the priesthood, a shy and uncommunicative youth. A stranger to life and the world, born to be an artist, he experiences the contradiction between the bright and shining world for which he longs and the narrowness of the external and internal life in the seminary of the prewar period. Still fully uncertain as to his real calling, driven by consideration for his parents, whose happiness he would otherwise destroy, fired by ideals to become a brilliant leader of his people like Maironis, he takes the vows. In the second part of the book

tragedy of his fate: he is unable to realize his ambitious plans and must leave them to his heir, Mindaugas; and he meets disaster in his personal fate as well, when, blinded by jealousy, he slays his noble wife Vovere. To be sure, this family tragedy only forms a border around the basic idea of the poem--the uniting of the land of Dzukija.

"Only one sun stands in the sky, only one ruler shall be in Dainava, or the earth will not retain me alive."

Beside Šarunas the drawing of the other charcters in the poem pales; he himself is represented above life-size, the way the old folk sagas portray him. (20) The poem is written in

20. Cf. here Krevé's scholarly investigations on Šarunas, printed in Musu tautosaka (Our Folk Poetry), Vol. I, pp. 90-123. [113]

lyric language.

A second historical poem of Krevé--Skirgaila (1925)--forms as to period and content of ideas a sequel to the first. The drama in four acts is based on the relations of this Grand Duke to Poland and the German orders. In the center of the plot stands the daughter of the prince of Lyda, Ona Duonute, who is loved by the German knight Keller and loves him in turn. In the second act there is a clash between Skirgaila and the knight. Skirgaila forces the princess to become his wife, and through this marriage unites her land with his. The climax of the drama is formed by the third act, in which the grand duke fights a difficult inner battle. He sees the importance of the old pagan gods and the power of the Christian God, he feels himself politically threatened by Poland as well as the orders, and he sees his marriage endangered by the love of his wife for the German knight. Finally the feeling of revenge gains the victory. In the last act

538 the conflict is resolved: the grand duke accomplishes his cruel revenge by having Keller buried alive. In the intensity of its tragedy this work achieves the power of high drama.

/294/ No less characteristic than this drama is the poem Dainavos šalies senų žmonių padavimai (Sagas of the Ancients from the Land of Dainava), written in an elevated lyric language, the introduction of which I have given in German translation in my book Hinter den Seen, hinter den Wäldern. Bilder litauischen Volkstums. Here the full romantic splendor of Krėvė's language is unfolded, and the mysterious mood of the ancient pagan land is transferred directly to the reader. This poem tells of the dreaming girls at copper gates awaiting the youths who ride up on dark brown horses with silver hoofs and golden bridles, of death in battle and mourning for the beloved. The whole mood of the idealizing dainos comes alive here.

But the Lithuanian village has still another side, and that Krėvė knew how to capture this also proves the breadth of his artistic conception. His drama Žentas (The Son-in-Law) portrays for us the results of a marriage concluded without love, only for considerations of property, and the discord in a peasant family in plastic and realistic images; in the peasant tales that are collected in Volumes II and III of his works under the title Šiaudinėj pastogėj (Under the Straw Roof) he gives us analyses and pictures of conditions of the peasant life of the most recent prewar period. In their realism they actually recall at times Žemaitė, for example when the author describes a ruined village hut in "Vargingame gyvenime" (Life in Misery).

P. Lapienė very perceptively notes in one place in her analysis of the writings of Krėvė (21) that every people seen from the outside

21. In Varpas, 1932, No. 3, pp. 214-15.